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JACK ANDERSON

Qaddafi Linked As Bankroller Of Terrorists

Libyan dictator Col. Muammar Qaddafi has denied vehemently that he sent a "hit squad" into this country to assassinate President Reagan, but U.S. intelligence agencies have evidence linking Qaddafi's freely dispensed petrodollars to the terrorist gang that kidnaped American Army Gen. James Dozier.

So far, there is no direct link between Dozier's kidnapping by the Italian Red Brigades and Qaddafi's terrorist campaign against U.S. officials in this country and abroad.

But Qaddafi has lavished millions of Libya's oil dollars on terrorist groups like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the moribund Baader-Meinhof Gang in West Germany, the Irish Republican Army and the Red Brigades. Qaddafi has provided these outlaw groups with money, weapons and training. Our intelligence agencies are convinced of that.

Ever since the seizure of American hostages in Tehran more than two years ago, U.S. intelligence agencies and the State Department have intensified their investigations of international terrorism, in hopes of

figuring out some way to control it. My sources tell me that Foggy Bottom is thinking of beefing up the Special Office for Combating Terrorism, which has been somewhat less than effective in the past.

Meanwhile, the little-publicized Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI), which pinpointed Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as a major threat to the shah of Iran years before other U.S. intelligence agencies tumbled to that possibility, has taken the lead in studying the increasingly important war against anti-American terrorists.

Some highlights from a recent, secret OSI report, reviewed by my associate Lucette Lagnado:

- For most terrorist groups, like the Palestinians and the Italian Red Brigades, Americans constitute a favorite target. (The report was issued before Dozier's kidnapping.)

- Although the groups have a wide range of political views, the secret report notes, they feel a "revolutionary kinship" in their hostility toward "imperialism" in general and the United States in particular.

- Today's terrorist groups have become more street-smart and less individually oriented, the OSI experts warn. Recognizing the vulnerability that attaches to identification with a particular leader, the groups have become more loosely structured and autonomous. They have realized that "personality cults are not conducive to operational security nor to

decisive action when the opportunity presents itself."

- A final alarming note in the OSI report indicates that the terrorist groups have become less ideologically pure. They now welcome hardened criminals into their ranks, evidently willing to forgo revolutionary zeal for the practical rewards of professional expertise.

A Suspicion Confirmed: On Nov. 21, 1970, a picked team of 60 American commandos landed deep within North Vietnamese territory at a supposed prisoner of war camp to rescue U.S. prisoners. The raid on Son Tay, 23 miles west of Hanoi, was successfully executed, but the raiders came up empty-handed: there were no American prisoners.

When Sen. J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.) suggested that the Son Tay raid had been a political move by President Nixon, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird said such an accusation was absurd.

Now, more than 11 years later, intelligence and Pentagon sources have acknowledged that Fulbright was right: the president and the Joint Chiefs of Staff knew there were no American POWs at Son Tay. The sources, including an adviser who was intimately involved in planning the raid, told my associates Dale Van Atta and Don Goldberg that the daring escapade was deliberately planned for political reasons: to impress the North Vietnamese with their own vulnerability.